

St. Andrew's by the Sea Uniting Church

Christian Community in the Heart of Glenelg

Rev. Christine Gilbert



Image: *Contemplation* by Sasa Milojkavic

Fourth Sunday in the Season of Advent 22nd December 2019

God's love and beauty impart beauty to the soul,
and the soul that mirrors God is aflame with love.

— Ernesto Cardenal

GATHERING

Preparing Our Space and Our Hearts

Call to Worship

with Psalm 80:3

In a few days' time, the wait will be over
and that which we have anticipated will come to pass.
But for now, let us still our bodies,
let go of any still-to-be-finished tasks,
and breathe deeply...

We pray,

***Restore us, O God,
let your face shine that we may be saved.***

Even as the mad rush goes on around us,
even as we may get caught up in
the heightened expectations of this season,
here, now, we express our desire for
lasting joy,
deep peace,
self-giving love.

And so we pray,

***Restore us, O God,
let your face shine that we may be saved.***

We Sing

“Long before the suns of summer”

Long before the suns of summer
Turned above the ochred earth,
God prepared for human knowing
One pure, perfect point of light.
Seeded deep within our dreaming,
Hope that hungers to be born.

Spirit breathes across the desert,
Whispers that the time is now,
When the silent sighs of sadness
Are lifted in a baby’s cry.
And the evening stars sing glory
Of a hope forever born.

Pilgrims, ours the Spirit-calling,
Bearers of the holy name.
Carry love conceived within us
Ever waiting to be born.
Ours the star that blazes in the darkest night.
Christ, our hope, forever born.

Words: Neil Quintrell
Tune: Picardy

Passing the Peace of Christ

The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you!

Lighting of the Advent Candle

After a week of heat wave and harsh light, we dare to light candles that reflect our growing desire for greater hope, peace, joy and love in the world.

(three Advent candles are lit)

Meister Eckhart's four-fold way has guided us in these Advent weeks—encountering, emptying, bearing, loving. Let us ponder these words from Eckhart about bearing love in our time:

If I could love
 as God loves
I would not
 fear the judgment
of others
 or the loss of my
very self and would
 know that God is
the one who knows
 and loves and desires
himself and all
 things and loves
me most when
 I finally let go of
trying and simply
 let myself live love.

(from Meister Eckhart's Book of the Heart by Jon M. Sweeney and Mark S. Burrows)

Let us pray.

Author of our lives,

as Christmas Day draws near

and we celebrate your True Light shining brightly in our world,
may we see more clearly what really matters.

***May your new creation be our priority,
your love our greatest desire.***

(prayer continues in silence)

Whenever the opportunity to love

presents itself in the remainder of these days,

may we say, "Let it be with me according to your will." Amen.

(the final Advent candle is lit)

We Sing

"God of all people"

(remain seated)

God of all places: present unseen;

Voice in our silence, song in our midst.

We are your people, knowing, unsure.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

God of all dreaming, near and yet far.

Vision unheard of, wake us to rest.

We are your presence, sent forth afraid.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

God of all people, dust and the clay.

Breath of a new wind, fire in our hearts.

Light born of heaven, peace on the earth.

Words: David Haas

Tune: KINGDOM

ENCOUNTERING**Scripture Readings**

Isaiah 7:10-16

Matthew 1:18-25

May your word live in us:

and bear much fruit to your glory.

Reflection on the Word**RESPONDING****We Sing**

"Star child"

Star-Child earth-Child, go-between of God,
love Child, Christ Child, heaven's lightening rod:

Refrain:

This year, this year, let the day arrive
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive.

Street child, beat child, no place left to go,
hurt child, used child, no one wants to know:

Grown child, old child, memory full of years,
sad child, lost child, story told in tears:

Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign,
down-to-earth Child, Star of stars that shine:

Words: Shirley Erena Murray

Prayers of the People

The Disciple's Prayer

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.*

Christmas Bowl Presentation

Collection and Offering Song

(TiS 271)

Praise to the incarnate Son
 who comes to set us free,
 with Father, Spirit, ever one
 to all eternity.

Words: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749

Prayer of Dedication

God of Hospitality and Grace:
 we pray for Syrian refugees in Jordan
 and all who must make their home in temporary places.
 Make our love visible through this offering, we pray.
*We release these gifts into your river of love,
 that they may flow out
 and bring hope and transformation. Amen.*

(from the Christmas Bowl resources)

JOURNEYING**We Sing**

“Once in royal David’s City”

(TiS 312)

Once in royal David’s city
 stood a lowly cattle shed
 where a mother laid her baby
 in a manger for his bed:
 Mary was that mother mild,
 Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven
 who is God and Lord of all,
 and his shelter was a stable,
 and his cradle was a stall;
 with the poor, despised and lowly
 lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And our eyes at last shall see him,
 through his own redeeming love,
 for that child so dear and gentle
 is our Lord in heaven above;
 and he leads his children on
 to the place where he is gone.

Words: Cecil Alexander

Tune: IRBY

Sung Benediction

“May the kindness of our Lord, Jesus”

May the kindness of our Lord, Jesus
 And the love of our God
 And the friendship, and the unity
 of the Spirit be with you.
 Be with you.

Words and music: Andrew Dutney

Please gather for morning tea, in the hall after worship